

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration
Office of the Administrator
Washington, DC 20546-0001



February 28, 2003

Admiral Harold Gehman, USN (Ret.)
Chairman
Columbia Action Investigation Board
16850 Saturn Lane
Houston, Texas 77058

Dear Admiral Gehman:

While I understand the purpose of your letter of February 25, 2003, I am convinced this course of action will be viewed as prejudging the facts before the investigation is complete. Despite your assurances that no conclusions have been made arising from the facts of the investigation at this time, simply reassigning personnel will not accomplish your stated goal. Moreover, new personnel could be subjected to the same appearance of conflict in the future and I will not submit anyone to this treatment.

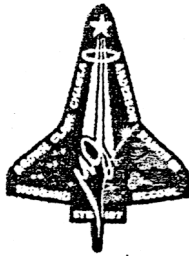
However, since your investigation has matured, it is apparent that our original structure to support the investigation needs to transition as well. Therefore, we intend to reorganize our efforts to interface better with the structure of the Board. To that end, we plan to establish an interface mechanism with the three subdivisions of your Board for materials, operations, and technology.

Our Task Force will facilitate these new interfaces. Specifically, we will assign professionals from outside the shuttle program management structure to lead these efforts. Please anticipate that in the next few days ahead that we will accomplish this transition.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sean O'Keefe". The signature is stylized with a large "S" and "O", and a cursive "Keefe".

Sean O'Keefe
Administrator



CHAIRMAN
COLUMBIA ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BOARD
16850 SATURN LANE, HOUSTON, TX 77058

Ser CAIB/031
25 Feb 03

Dear Mr. O'Keefe,

On behalf of the Columbia Accident Investigation Board, we wish to express our thanks for the fine cooperation provided to the Board by all levels of NASA. We have met motivated and talented people who want to find out what happened to the Shuttle Columbia and its crew as much as we do.

Now that the initial recovery and response actions are behind us and operations are more predictable and manageable, the Board requests that you reassign the top level Space Shuttle Program management personnel who were involved in the preparation and operation of the flight of STS 107 back to their duties and remove them from directly managing or supporting the investigation. We believe it is in the best interest of these key people, NASA and the effective progress of the investigation if they were to be replaced by other knowledgeable people to manage the response and investigation support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "H. W. Gehman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent "j" at the end of the last name.

H. W. GEHMAN
Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)
Chairman
Columbia Accident Investigation Board

The Honorable Sean O'Keefe
Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Washington, DC 20546-0001